



## **CONSUMER ALERT**

# **Watch for Donation Scams Following Hurricane Irene**

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MADISON – As the United States East Coast recovers from Hurricane Irene, the Wisconsin Bureau of Consumer Protection cautions people who intend to donate to the recovery effort to watch out for donation scams. Unfortunately, scam artists take advantage of these tragedies and prey upon people's desire to help the victims.

"Don't let disaster strike twice," said Sandy Chalmers, Administrator of the Division of Trade and Consumer Protection. "Be wary of any e-mail soliciting funds for Hurricane Irene victims."

Consumer Protection offers these five tips when considering making a charitable donation:

- Do not respond to an unsolicited (SPAM) email or click on links contained within the email. Links may contain viruses.
- Make donations to established, reputable organizations by directly visiting their website rather than following an alleged link to a website found in an email.
- Be cautious when making an online donation. Most legitimate charity websites end in "dot-org" rather than "dot-com." Also, use sites with a URL address that begins with "https" – the "s" stands for secure.
- Never provide personally identifiable information, such as your Social Security number, credit card number, bank account numbers, to a solicitor.
- Verify the legitimacy of a charity by checking it with the Better Business Bureau (1-800-273-1002) or [www.give.org](http://www.give.org). Other helpful resources include [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org) or [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).

For more consumer information, or to file a consumer complaint, visit the Bureau of Consumer Protection's website at [datcp.wisconsin.gov](http://datcp.wisconsin.gov); via e-mail at [datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov) or call toll-free at 1-800-422-7128.